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## **Maine Hiking Trail To Be Dedicated to Former NOAA Fisheries Atlantic Salmon Team Member**

A long-time member of the NOAA Fisheries Service Atlantic salmon research team will be honored September 10, 2016 with the dedication of the Ed Hastings Memorial Trail at Green Lake National Fish Hatchery (GLNFH) in Ellsworth, Maine.

The trail honors the contributions of Ed Hastings, a longtime member of the NOAA Fisheries salmon research team in Maine who was known for his positive and enthusiastic attitude about and tireless efforts for Atlantic salmon recovery. It also connects the public with one of the nation's most imperiled fisheries resources, Gulf of Maine Atlantic salmon.

Ed Hastings led a novel salmon tagging program for five years before becoming ill in the spring of 2006 and passing away that fall from cancer. Through strong working relationships and partnerships with staff at the Green Lake National Fish Hatchery and a crew of seasonal workers, he built the program into one of the largest marking efforts of its type in the world at that time.

Each spring he recruited and trained a dozen fish taggers from the local community, making sure everyone knew the importance of the work and what their accuracy meant to salmon conservation. Many of the taggers, who ranged from college students on break and stay-at-home parents to seasonal forest products workers, had never tagged a fish before, but they soon became a tagging team.

Hastings successfully managed the logistics of tagging 350,000 salmon smolts from multiple hatchery pools in a seamless operation that lasted 6 weeks each spring. "He minimized impacts to fish and increased tag retention each year through attention to detail and effective coaching," said John Kocik of the Atlantic Salmon Ecosystems Research Team at the Maine Field Station in Orono, a longtime colleague.

"His enthusiasm about his work was contagious, and this translated into effective leadership. Each person developed a sense of ownership in the project. New taggers entered the program with various backgrounds and opinions on salmon recovery, but all left understanding the challenges faced by these fish and by those individuals trying to restore Atlantic salmon and their ecosystems."

Ed Hastings' commitment to salmon did not stop at the end of the workday. He volunteered his time generously to the Friends of Green Lake National Fish Hatchery, Inc., a group active in education about Atlantic salmon and their habitat. He also supported the Fish Friends Program, which supplies salmon eggs to local schools to raise in temperature-controlled egg incubators and fish tanks before releasing to local rivers where the parent hatched and returned to spawn in the spring. It was in this educational role that Ed Hastings made visible the sometimes forgotten plight of salmon at sea and the role of NOAA in understanding marine ecology and improving salmon marine survival.

Over the past few summers, dozens of volunteers from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Maine Department of Marine Resources, local schools, and the general public have come together to work on the trail. Pete Colman, a local trail expert from Pathmaker Trail Services, created the trail layout, and all the labor for the project was donated by volunteers and organized by staff and The Friends of Green Lake NFH. A grant from NOAA's Preserve America Initiative Internal Funding paid for building materials for bridges for walking trails, kiosks, and production of high quality interpretive signs to educate the public about the sea-run fish of Maine.

The 1.35-mile long trail begins at the hatchery complex entrance gate and twists its way through the woods towards Green Lake. Interpretive signs are placed along the way. At the culmination, a granite bench invites hikers to rest and admire the view of Green Lake.

"While many who built this trail share a common interest in restoring sea-run fish, the creation and construction of the trail was done to honor the memory of a beloved friend and colleague," Kocik said on behalf of all those who knew and worked with Ed.

The official dedication of the Ed Hastings Memorial Trail on September 10 will permanently honor Ed Hastings's legacy and connect the public with the fish and the landscape he loved. The dedication ceremony will take place at 10 a.m. and will be followed by a day of outdoor activities and a cook-out.

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Related links:

Green Lake National Fish Hatchery: <https://www.fws.gov/northeast/greenlake/index.html>

Atlantic Salmon Ecosystems Research Team (ASERT): <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/salmon/>

Species in the Spotlight - Atlantic Salmon:

[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2015/12/spotlight\\_atlantic\\_salmon.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2015/12/spotlight_atlantic_salmon.html)